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Journal From My Night Hotel Jacqueline Hartwich

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Jacqueline Hartwich

JOURNAL FROM MY NIGHT HOTEL

1.

In my night hotel, the windows wrap thick to hold back the sea. I keep room service busy, sending up for secret parchments, and Jasmine oil, and priests with Goya eyes whose hands instruct my skin. Nights when dolphins rub the glass, my fingers track them like blind eyes or sealed lips. My father came to me in this water-locked room for years, then disappeared one day, leaving me here, half-ghost and half-child.

2.

Last night, room service never answered. I lay curled to the quick on the peeled bed, watching Father's dry drowned body fasten to the skylight, a pale starfish. I whispered like a familiar: poor Ben, I keep pulling you from your limestone porch and that broken-down fiddle patched with snail lime. Still playing, *Oh carry me back to my little grass shack in Kalakahoo, Hawaii.*

3.

This evening, I asked for milk and they delivered angels who beat their moth wings on the skylight. They wiped out the notes Ben fingers on the years. Gone. And your wife has remarried, Ben. A good, single-minded man who doesn't sing or dance. Maybe you can let the strings lie now—let angels eat your songs and wrap white skirts around your soft old bones and plant you forever under a sea fan.

4.

Soon I will shape my own song out of dead snails and worms at the bottom of my dreams. Air will ride directly on my skin and when a man touches me, his hands will smell of grass and sunlight. But he won't pluck strings and dance and sing "My Little Grass Shack" the way you did, Ben. Never.